

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 0482

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PO, MZ

SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE-MOZAMBICAN RELATIONS STRAINED

REF: LISBON 0309 (DTG 151556Z JAN 76)

SUMMARY: DISPUTES OVER PORTUGUESE PRISONERS IN MOZAMBIQUE AND AIR RIGHTS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES HAVE LED TO DETERIORATION OF PORTUGUESE-MOZAMBICAN RELATIONS. GOP, WARY OF TARNISHING THIRD WORLD IMAGE, IS ATTEMPTING TO SOLVE OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS WITH MINIMUM OF FANFARE. END SUMMARY.

1. JAN 20 COMMENTS BY PORTUGUESE FONMIN MELO ANTUNES FOCUSED
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ATTENTION ON INCREASINGLY STRAINED RELATIONS BETWEEN PORTUGAL

AND MOZAMBIQUE. "OUR RELATIONS WITH MOZAMBIQUE," ANTUNES SAID, "ARE PASSING THROUGH A PERIOD OF DIFFICULTY," HAVING ROOTS BOTH IN INTERNAL MOZAMBIKAN POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND TENDENCY AMONG PORTUGUESE TO EXPECT FORMER COLONIES WILL CONTINUE TO SUBORDINATE THEIR OWN INTERESTS TO THOSE OF PORTUGAL. ANTUNES AFFIRMED THAT, WHILE THEY HAD NO INFLUENCE OVER MOZAMBIQUE'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS, PORTUGUESE CAN AND SHOULD ALTER THEIR OWN EXPECTATIONS.

2. THE ISSUES: TWO ISSUES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS:

--PRISONER QUESTION: DEPENDING UPON SOURCE, FROM A FEW DOZEN TO BETWEEN FIFTY AND ONE HUNDRED PORTUGUESE NATIONALS ARE CURRENTLY BEING HELD IN MOZAMBIQUE PRISONS ON POLITICAL, CAPRICIOUS, OR TRUMPED UP CHARGES. ESPECIALLY IN LAST MONTH, PRISONERS' FAMILIES AND LAYERS IN PORTUGAL HAVE CONDUCTED NOISY CAMPAIGN TO SECURE THEIR RELEASE. THEY HAVE CHARGED THAT GOP HAS BEEN REMISS IN ITS EFFORTS TO FREE PRISONERS AND TO PROTECT GENERAL INTERESTS OF PORTUGUESE IN MOZAMBIQUE. REJECTING CHARGES THAT HE HAS SHIRKED RESPONSIBILITIES, FOREIGN MINISTER HAS ATTEMPTED TO CALM PUBLIC OUTCRY OVER ISSUE, ASSERTING THAT HIGHLY PUBLICIZED FREE-THE-PRISONERS CAMPAIGN WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. ROVING AMBASSADOR COSTA BRAS HAS BEEN DISPATCHED TO MOZAMBIQUE TO SEEK SOLUTION TO PROBLEM.

--AIR RIGHTS DISPUTE: DIRECT AIR TRAFFIC BETWEEN PORTUGAL AND MOZAMBIQUE HAS BEEN SUSPENDED SINCE JAN 13 BREAKDOWN OF TALKS TO CONCLUDE AIR RIGHTS AGREEMENT (REFTEL). AFTER MOZAMBIQUE BECAME INDEPENDENT IN JULY 1975, PORTUGUESE AND MOZAMBIKAN NATIONAL CARRIERS HAD EACH FLOWN THREE ROUND TRIP FLIGHTS PER WEEK BETWEEN LISBON AND MOZAMBIQUE ON BASIS OF INFORMAL UNDERSTANDING. ON DEC 11, MOZAMBIQUE INFORMED GOP THAT, BEGINNING JAN 14, INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS WOULD HAVE TO LAND AT BEIRA, IN NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE, AND CALLED FOR IMMEDIATE NEGOTIATIONS TO CONCLUDE FORMAL AIR ACCORD. AS MAJORITY OF PORTUGUESE INTERESTS ARE LOCATED IN LOURENCO MARQUES, GOP HOPED TO CONVINCE MOZAMBIQUE TO REVERSE DECISION ON AIRPORT SWITCH DURING NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH BEGAN JAN 8. MOZAMBIQUE DELEGATES

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REMAINED INTRANSIGENT, HOWEVER, AND TALKS WERE BROKEN OFF JAN 13. GOP SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED SUSPENSION OF PORTUGUESE FLIGHTS TO MOZAMBIQUE. MOZAMBIQUE NATIONAL CARRIER IS CONTINUING TO PROVIDE SERVICE BETWEEN MOZAMBIQUE AND LISBON THROUGH LUANDA.

3. COMMENT: SINCE APRIL 1974 COUP, GOP HAS CULTIVATED IMAGE OF SOLIDARITY WITH THIRD WORLD NATIONS. FONMIN ANTUNES HAS

BEEN MOST CONSISTENT AND ENTHUSIASTIC PROMOTER OF THIS POLICY.
STRAINED RELATIONS WITH MOZAMBIQUE WOULD SERIOUSLY TARNISH
PORTUGAL'S THIRD WORLD IMAGE; HENCE MELO ANTUNES'S ALMOST
APOLOGETIC REMARKS ON CURRENT STATE OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS AND FOREIGN MINISTRY'S WARY APPROACH TO PRISONER
ISSUE.
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